

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PRAGUE 02367 01 OF 02 231545Z
ACTION H-03

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3465

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PRAGUE 2367

PLEASE RESTRICT DISTRIBUTION TO "H" UNTIL THIS MESSAGE
RECEIVES CLEARANCE BY SENATOR BIDEN
E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OREP (BIDEN, JOSEPH)
SUBJECT: CODEL BIDEN: LUNCHEON MEETING WITH CZECHOSLOVAK
DEP FON MIN TRHLIK

1. SUMMARY: DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER TRHLIK, ACCOMPANIED BY
AMBASSADOR TO US JOHANES, MFA DIRECTOR FOR BASIC POLICY QUESTIONS
HANDL, AND ACTING SIXTH DEPT. DIRECTOR NOVOTNY, WAS HOST TO
LENGTHY LUNCHEON DISCUSSION WITH SENATOR BIDEN ON AUGUST 17.
THE SENATOR WAS ACCOMPANIED BY SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
STAFF MEMBER JOHN RITCH AND CHARGE. THIS APPROXIMATELY THREE-HOUR
CONVERSATION WAS UNUSUALLY CANDID, BUT CORDIAL, AND FOCUSED MAINLY
ON EAST-WEST PROBLEMS IN EUROPE--INCLUDING SOVIET INTERVENTION IN
CZECHOSLOVAKIA, SALT, MBFR, AND EURO-COMMUNISM. US-CZECHOSLOVAK
RELATIONS
WERE BRIEFLY REVIEWED IN GENERAL TERMS. END SUMMARY.

2. SOVIET-CZECHOSLOVAK RELATIONS. SENATOR BIDEN TOOK POSITION
THAT FROM A PRACTICAL POINT OF VIEW IT WAS DIFFICULT TO GET THE
US SENATE TO TAKE INITIATIVES FAVORING STEPPED-UP RELATIONS
WITH CZECHOSLOVAKIA, WHILE THERE REMAIN MANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE
SOVIET ROLE IN PRAGUE THAT ARE DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND. FOR
EXAMPLE, AMERICANS AND THEIR SENATORS HAVE NEVER UNDERSTOOD WHY
MOSCOW THOUGHT IT NECESSARY TO SEND TANKS INTO PRAGUE NINE YEARS
AGO THIS WEEK TO FORCE DUBCEK TO DESIST FROM ATTEMPTING
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PAGE 02 PRAGUE 02367 01 OF 02 231545Z

TO CREATE "SOCIALISM WITH A HUMAN FACE." THE SENATOR WONDERED
WHAT THE CZECHOSLOVAK PEOPLE THOUGHT ABOUT CONTINUING PRESENCE
OF SOVIET TROOPS HERE-A PRESENCE WHICH SEEMED TO RENDER CZECHO-
SLOVAKIA
A "PUPPET STATE".

3. TRHLIK REPLIED THAT CZECHOSLOVAK ATTITUDES TOWARD THE USSR HAVE

TO BE UNDERSTOOD IN TERMS OF HISTORY. FOR CENTURIES CZECHOSLOVAKS WERE DOMINATED BY THE GERMANIC PEOPLE. FROM 1620 UNTIL 1918 THE CZECHS WERE UNDER THE DOMINATION OF AUSTRIA. IN 1938, PRAGUE LOOKED TO THE WEST FOR SUPPORT AGAINST A RESURGENCE OF GERMANIC HEGEMONY AT MUNICH AND RECEIVED NONE. THEN, HITLER OVER-RAN AND OCCUPIED CZECHOSLOVAKIA DURING WORLD WAR II. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, TRHLIK ARGUEDGY IT IS NOT ILLOGICAL THAT CZECHOSLOVAKS TURNED EAST TO SOVIETS AFTER THE WAR TO KEEP PEACE -- "AND PEACE HAS BEEN KEPT." AS FOR 1968, TRHLIK THOUGHT "DUBCEK WAS A FOOL" FOR ALLOWING THE POLITICAL SITUATION HERE TO SPIN OUT OF CONTROL. THE SOVIETS RESORTED

TO FORCE MAINLY TO RESTORE ORDER AND OUT OF CONCERN OVER "FOREIGN INFLUENCES". CZECHS UNDERSTAND THAT SUCH ACTION WAS NECESSARY, HE SAID, THOUGH THEY MAY REGRET THAT MISTAKES WERE MADE WHICH CALLED FOR INTRODUCTIONLF TROOPS. HANDL ASSERTED THAT THE SOVIETS REGRETTED THE INTRODUCTION OF TROOPS "EVEN MORE" THAN THE CZECHS. AMB. JOHANES ADDED THAT SOVIET TANKS "DID NOT SHOOT ANYONE".SE SENATOR BIDEN WONDERED ABOUT PRESENT CSSR-USSR RELATIONS AND ASKED WHETHER THERE WAS ANY "DIFFERENTATION" AT ALL BETWEEN CZECHOSLOVAK AND SOVIET POLICIES. TRHLIK SAID THE CZECHS HAD LONG SINCE RESOLVED ALL THEIR DIFFERENCES WITH SOVIETS.

4. SALT. "THE SENATOR POINTED TO WASHINGTON'S DISAPPOINTMENT OVER NEGATIVE SOVIET REACTIONS TO SECRETARY VANCE'S EARLY 1977 SALT CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 PRAGUE 02367 01 OF 02 231545Z

PROPOSALS AIMED AT EXPEDITING PROGRESS TOWARD REDUCTIONS IN OFFENSIVE WEAPONS. HE ASKED WHAT WENT WRONG? TRHLIK THOUGHT THE NEW US ADMINISTRATION HAD VIOLATED WHAT HAD BECOME THE RULES OF THE GAME IN DISARMAMENT DIPLOMACY--I.E. THAT BOTH VIEWS ESPOUSED PUBLICLY AND OFFICIAL POSITIONS PUT FORWARD IN CONFIDENTIAL NEGOTIATIONS MUST BE ADVANCED SIMULTANEOUSLY. TRHLIK THOUGHT PRESYZ RELEASES BY US SIDE FOR POSSIBLE PROPAGANDA ADVANTAGE PRIOR TO FORMAL DISCUSSION WITH SOVIETS HAD LEFT MOSCOW VERY SUSPICIOUS OF US INTENTIONS.

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PAGE 01 PRAGUE 02367 02 OF 02 231555Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PRAGUE 2367

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ALSO THE SOVIETS GENUINELY WONDERED
WHETHER US MIGHT BE SEEKING UNILATERAL ADVANTAGES. THE SENATOR
PROBED THIS POINT, NOTING WASHINGTON WAS SIMPLY TRYING TO MOVE
TOWARD GENUINE DISARMAMENT THROUGH REDUCTIONS--NOT JUST A FREEZE IN A
RMS
LEVELS. TRHLIK SAID THE WAY TO ACHIEVE SUCH PROGRESS WAS NOT
THROUGH TELLING THE PRESS ABOUT IT FIRST.

5. MBFR. SENATOR BIDEN NOTED HE HAD BEEN STUDYING MBFR DEVELOPMENTS
AT VIENNA PRIOR TO VISITING PRAGUE AND ADMONISHED THAT IF VIENNA
TALKS FAIL TO ACHIEVE RESULTS, CZECHOSLOVAKS SHOULD BE AWARE
THAT CONGRESS MIGHT WELL PRESS FOR UNILATERAL WITHDRAWAL OF US
TROOPS FROM EUROPE. HE ASKED WHAT CZECHOSLOVAKS WOULD THINK OF
SUCH A TURN OF EVENTS, WHICH MIGHT LEAD TO SUBSTANTIAL STRENGTHENING
OF WEST GERMAN FORCES. WOULD US WITHDRAWAL BE A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT
?

TRHLIK THOUGHT IT WOULD, ASSUMING IT IS TAKEN IN COORDINATION
WITH OTHER STEPS. WHEN SENATOR BIDEN WARNED WITHDRAWAL COULD HAPPEN
WITHOUT REGARD TO ANY OTHER STEP AND COULD LEAD TO GERMANS TAKING
ON GREATER SHARE OF NATO'S DEFENSE, TRHLIK THOUGHT LATTER DEVELOPMENT
COULD BE TROUBLESOME "BUT NOT CATASTROPHIC", GIVEN CURRENT
WARSAW PACT STRENGTH.

6. EUROCOMMUNISM. THE SENATOR ASKED WHY CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND
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PAGE 02 PRAGUE 02367 02 OF 02 231555Z

USSR HAD REACTED SO SHARPLY TO SANTIAGO CARRILLO'S RECENT BOOK
ON "EUROCOMMUNISM AND THE STATE" AND WHY DIFFERENT ROADS TO COMMUNISM
SHOULD BE OPPOSED BY MOSCOW AND PRAGUE.
HANDL COUNTERED THAT 1976 BERLIN ECPC HAD, IN FACT, RESULTED IN
UNDERSTANDING THAT DIVERGENT ROADS TO COMMUNISM WERE POSSIBLE.
TRHLIK STRESSED CARILLO HAD BEEN REBUFFED BECAUSE HE INSULTED
THE SOVIETS. THE SENATOR THEN BUILT A HYPOTHETICAL CASE THAT IN
THE EVENT OF A COMMUNIST ASCENSION TO POWER IN ITALY, HE
PERSONALLY WOULD ENDORSE DEPLOYMENT OF NATO TANKS TO ROME IN
ORDER TO REASSERT WESTERN-STYLE ORDER-- POINTING OUT THAT THIS WOULD
BE FULLY CONSONANT WITH THE CZECHS' ANALYSIS OF WHAT NEEDED TO BE
DONE BY THE EAST IN PRAGUE IN 1968. THIS BAITING OF HIS HOSTS

PROVOKED ONLY SMILES AND A CONSPICUOUS SILENCE.

7. US-CZECHOSLOVAK RELATIONS. THE CZECHOSLOVAKS EXPRESSED HOPE FOR A REINVIGORATION OF EAST-WEST DETENTE AND FOR SETTLEMENT OF THE LONGSTANDING CLAIMS/GOLD PROBLEM PRECLUDING IMPROVEMENT IN US-CZECHOSLOVAK RELATIONS. THEY ESPECIALLY CRITICIZED LONG-GRAVEL AMENDMENT (SECTION 408) OF 1974 TRADE ACT AND WONDERED WHAT MIGHT BECOME OF JACKSON-VANIK AMENDMENT. SENATOR BIDEN SPECULATED IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO RESOLVE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH SECTION 408, BUT BELIEVED IT WOULD BE MORE DIFFICULT TO ALTER JACKSON-VANIK. HE MADE CLEAR HIS OWN DESIRE TO PURSUE WITH VIGILANCE THE CONSTRUCTION OF EAST-WEST DETENTE--INCLUDING EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN US-CZECHOSLOVAK TIES AND LOOKED FORWARD TO CONTINUING CONTACTS IN WASHINGTON WITH AMBASSADOR JOHANES. FROWICK

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